Technical Image Evaluation Handbook

PPA Professional Photographers of America

CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on passing the Certification exam!

The next step to obtain your Certified Professional Photographer certification is to submit images to the Technical Image Evaluation. The Technical Image Evaluation is an objective practical part of the process that was developed for photographers to showcase their technical skill. This handbook has been designed to guide you in this process.

Becoming a Certified Professional Photographer means that you have taken the time to truly learn and master the fundamentals of photography and we want to support you on that journey.

Best of luck on the Technical Image Evaluation!

If you have any questions about the Technical Image Evaluation, please reach out to us at cpp@ppa.com

Technical Image Evaluation Set-Up Guide

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

To begin the Technical Image Evaluation process, you will need to order your Technical Image Evaluation Kit from Blick Art Materials. Please allow 5–10 business days for shipping and check the Technical Image Evaluation schedule and deadlines.

Items you will need:

1. **Blick Art Material Kit**
   - 4″ Diameter Styrofoam ball
   - 12″ Hardwood Manikin (AKA Sherman)
   - 3 sheets of Candon Mi-Teintes Drawing Paper in Flannel Gray color
   - Set of 8 Crayola Crayons
   - Black Sharpie marker
2. **Camera that has Manual mode (DSLR or Mirrorless)**
3. **Lens that has 70-105mm focal length range**
4. **Tripod**
5. **Camera shutter release (optional)**
6. **Gray card**
7. **Light Meter**
8. **Tape Measure**
9. **Clutter-free 7x15 foot space**
10. **Other items such as reflectors, strobes, speedlites/flashes, or LED/continuous lighting will be needed depending on which lighting option you choose**

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Certification Technical Image Evaluation Criteria

Your submission must meet all the following requirements to pass this portion of the evaluation and to acquire your certification.

All three of the images will be checked against the following criteria:

- ☐ **All approved kit items are used**
- ☐ **All images are submitted unedited in RAW format.** Images submitted in JPEG, TIFF, PSD, or anything other than your camera's version of RAW will not be evaluated.
- ☐ **Layout/Composition:**
  1. Manikin is placed in the center of the composition with arms down at side standing straight, set of 8 crayons out of the box (black crayon required) are on the left-hand side of image, Styrofoam ball on the right slightly in front of manikin, and black Sharpie (cap removed and placed on the end of the marker) in front of the Styrofoam Ball. This must match the example images.
  2. All items are within the frame and no items are cropped from the image. All kit items are placed in the center of the composition.
  3. Gray paper acts as background.
- ☐ **Images fill the frame:** There should not be any floor space showing outside of the gray paper.
- ☐ **Camera Angle:** Angle of view and orientation of the set up should match the example image.

  Image One: Straight on, Portrait orientation

  Image Two: Overhead, Landscape orientation

  Image Three: Overhead, Landscape orientation

☐ **White Balance:**

- For the Electronic Lighting scenario, white balance is custom and should be within 5000–6000K.
- For the Natural Light and Continuous lighting scenario, white balance is custom and may have a wider range and does not have to fall within the same range as the Electronic Flash scenario.

☐ **Exposure:** Submitted files should be properly exposed without clipping of shadows or highlights.

- Acceptable highlight range: 220–250
- Acceptable midtone range: 195–230
- Acceptable shadow range: 5–35

☐ **Direction of Light:** The main light should be on the camera left side of all images and each image should show proper light direction and dimension. The manikin should be properly lit on the front and shadows should fall in appropriate areas in the image.

☐ **Sharpness:** Each image will be checked for correct sharpness.

Image One: The set of items should be acceptably sharp with the background appearing softer as shown in the example images.

Image Two: The top point of the manikin's head should be acceptably sharp, and the rest should fall off in sharpness.

Image Three: The entire image should display acceptable sharpness all the way through.

☐ **Metadata:** All submitted files will be checked for the following in the metadata.

1. Camera settings must match the written instructions for f/stop.
2. The lens focal length should be between 70–105mm.
3. The date created should fall within 90 days of submission.

TIP

View all three of your images together in compare mode to make sure exposures are consistent throughout your evaluation.

Use Adobe Bridge to view and compare all three of your images to make sure white balance and exposures are consistent throughout.

Step 1: Select your Lighting Setup

Determine the best lighting setup from the options given for the Technical Image Evaluation. Select only ONE lighting setup to complete the three image assignments

OPTION 1: Electronic Flash (speedlights, studio strobes)

Electronic Flash Lighting

- For this option, you will need to use a two-light setup, also known as the Main Light and the Fill Light. Studio strobes or flashes/speedlights are acceptable.
- Measure 43 inches from manikin head and place main light on left side of manikin at 90°. The light stand height should be at 3 feet minimum.
- Place fill light approximately 99 inches from rear base of manikin.
- You will need to utilize (2) 30–34" white-interior umbrellas or softboxes.
- The main light to the camera left (at 90° from the manikin) needs to be set to meter at f/11.
- The fill light, which will be placed directly behind the camera, needs to meter at one and a half stops less.
- In this lighting scenario, you will need to **custom white balance** for your light source. You will need to utilize a Gray Card to custom set your white balance. Shift your lens into manual focus, take the exposure, and set the white balance. Once you get your custom white balance set, return to automatic focus (please be aware of contamination from other light sources).

Your meter should be parallel to the manikin with the dome out aimed towards the light source you are metering:

Image 1 – Straight On: Portrait Orientation

Required aperture f/13, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

Image 2 – Overhead Minimum Depth of Field: Landscape Orientation

Required aperture f/5.6, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

Image 3 – Overhead Maximum Depth of Field: Landscape Orientation

Required aperture f/16, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

OPTION 2: Continuous Light (modeling lights, tungsten lighting, LED)

Continuous Light

- For this option, you will need to use a two-light setup, also known as the Main Light and the Fill Light. Modeling lights, tungsten lighting, and LED lights are acceptable.
- Measure 43 inches from manikin head and place main light on left side of manikin at 90°. The light stand height should be at 3 feet minimum.
- Place fill light approximately 99 inches from rear base of manikin.
- You will need to utilize (2) 30–34" white-interior umbrellas or softboxes.
- The main light to the camera left, (at 90° from the manikin), needs to be set to meter at f/11.
- The fill light, which will be placed directly behind the camera, needs to meter at one and a half stops less.
- In this lighting scenario, you will need to **custom white balance** for your light source. You will need to utilize a Grey Card to custom set your white balance. Shift your lens into manual focus, take the exposure, and set the white balance. Once you get your custom white balance set, return to automatic focus (please be aware of contamination from other light sources).

Your meter should be parallel to the manikin with the dome out aimed towards the light source you are metering:

Image 1 – Straight On: Portrait Orientation
Required aperture f/13, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

Image 2 – Overhead Minimum Depth of Field: Landscape Orientation
Required aperture f/5.6, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

Image 3 – Overhead Maximum Depth of Field: Landscape Orientation
Required aperture f/16, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

OPTION 3: Natural Light
(natural light, window light, available light)

Natural Light

- The main source of natural light will need to be on camera left at 90° from the manikin. The fill light in this scenario needs to be on camera right (by the manikin's left arm).
- For this option, you will need to utilize a white reflector or reflective surface to illuminate the shadow side of the set-up if necessary or you may need a black posterboard to block light from the fill light side depending on how your natural light falls in the location.
- You will need to set up the objects and meter your main source of light with the dome of the meter facing towards the main light and parallel to the manikin.
- The fill light needs to meter at one and one half stops less than the main light.
- In this lighting scenario, you will need to custom white balance for your light source. You will need to utilize a Grey Card to custom set your white balance. Shift your lens into manual focus, take the exposure, and set the white balance. Once you get your custom white balance set, return to automatic focus (please be aware of contamination from other light sources).

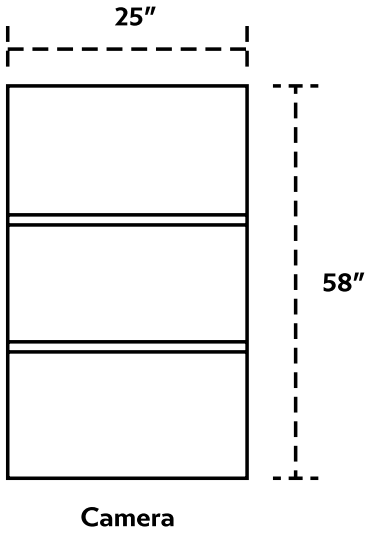
Image 1 – Straight On: Portrait Orientation
Required aperture f/13, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

Image 2 – Overhead Minimum Depth of Field: Landscape Orientation
Required aperture f/5.6, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

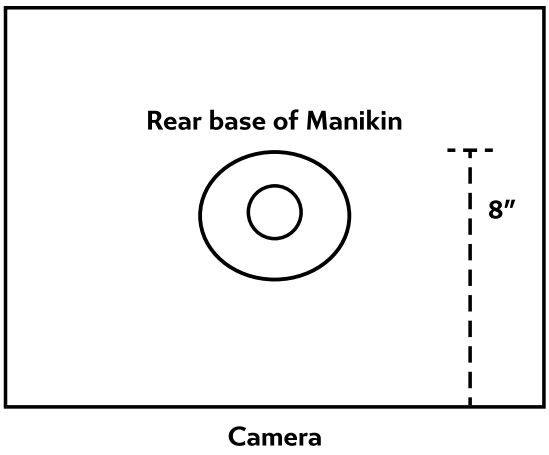
Image 3 – Overhead Maximum Depth of Field: Landscape Orientation
Required aperture f/16, shutter speed and ISO are determined by your meter reading

Step 2: Set Up the BLICK ART MATERIALS

1. To set up for your evaluation, you will need a floor space that is 7ft x 15ft wide.
2. Lay the 3 sheets of gray drawing paper down, (barcode facing the floor and the seams facing up), slightly overlapping towards the camera to ensure surface below paper is not visible in the image. All 3 sheets placed on the floor should be approximately 56–57 inches in length and 25 inches in width.



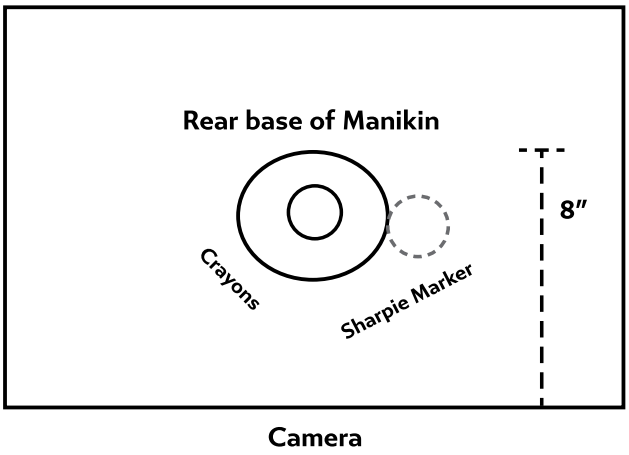
3. Place the 12″ Hardwood Manikin on the drawing paper measuring 8 inches from the front edge of the paper (closest to the camera) to the rear base of the manikin. The arms of manikin must be positioned with hands at its side. Manikin is placed in the center of the sheet.



4. Once the manikin has been properly placed 8 inches from front edge of paper closest to camera according to rear base of manikin, position remaining items accordingly:
   a. Styrofoam ball on the right upper side of manikin base (right arm of manikin if looking directly at manikin).

b. Place 8 Crayola crayons on the left side of manikin base at a 45-degree angle with crayon tips facing forward out of the box (order of crayons not specified). One of the crayons out of the eight MUST be black.

c. Place black Sharpie marker slightly angled in front of styrofoam ball. Place the cap of Sharpie marker on the end of the marker.



Step 3: Take the Photographs

You have received your BlickU kit, chosen a lighting scenario, set everything up based on the specifications of that scenario, and now you are ready to take the photos!

- Photograph your images in the smallest RAW format your camera will allow. No editing is allowed, and you must upload the original RAW file for the evaluation.
- Items should fill the frame for each image.
- Paper edges and flooring should not be visible in your images.
- Use the sample images as your guide for each lighting scenario! Your images should match the layout, angles, and composition of the sample images.
- Images must be tack-sharp on the manikin's "face" and top of the head.
- Images are evaluated in the most recent version of Adobe Bridge and Camera Raw. Profile: Adobe Standard.

TIP

Turn on your camera's viewfinder grid to help with placement of items within the frame.

Step 4: Review and Upload your Images to the Technical Image Evaluation

The Technical Image Evaluation will take place during one week of each month from February to November of each year (dates and details here).

Before uploading your images to the evaluation, drop them into Adobe Bridge to compare your images side-by-side with sample images. Your images should be consistent in their white balance, exposure, and you should check to make sure each image will meet the criteria. You are not allowed to edit your images, but this step will allow you to take any photos again that do not meet the criteria before submitting them to the evaluation.

You should measure the Highlights (whites), Midtones (grays), and Shadows (blacks) in your image with the eye dropper tool to make sure your images fit in the ranges on the Criteria Checklist.

You can access the evaluation upload in your MyPPA account.

1. Log into your MyPPA dashboard
2. Navigate to the myAchievements tab
3. Select ***Certifications*** to expand the selection where you can view the option to ***Upload Evaluation***

From there you may upload your images during any open evaluation period.
Please note: the upload evaluation button will only be visible during the one-week period the evaluation is open.

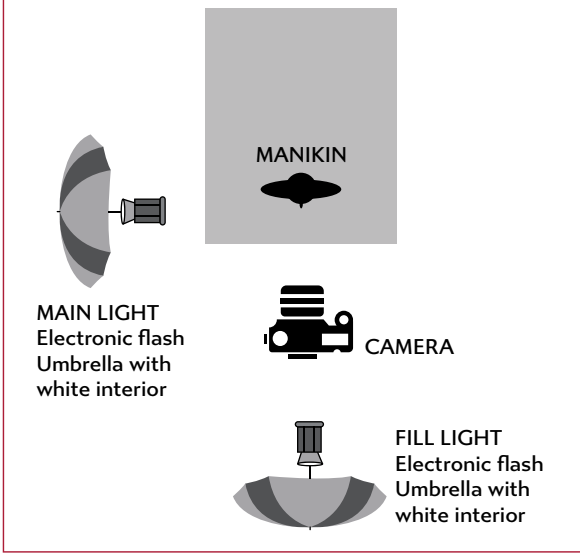
Technical Image Evaluation results will be sent via email approximately one week after the Technical Image Evaluation deadline.

TIP

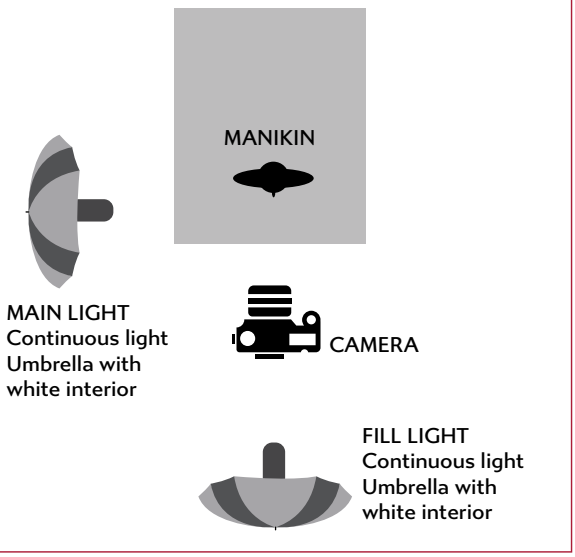
If possible, tether to a computer or tablet while you are taking your photographs to help you evaluate your images as you go.

LIGHTING SETUPS

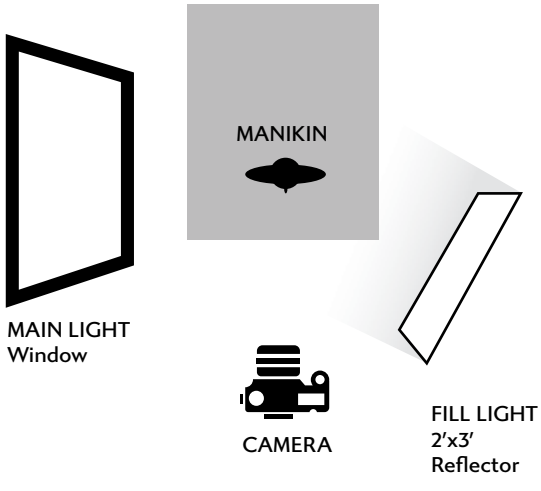
ELECTRONIC FLASH SETUP



CONTINUOUS LIGHT SETUP



NATURAL LIGHT SETUP



ELECTRONIC FLASH SAMPLE IMAGES

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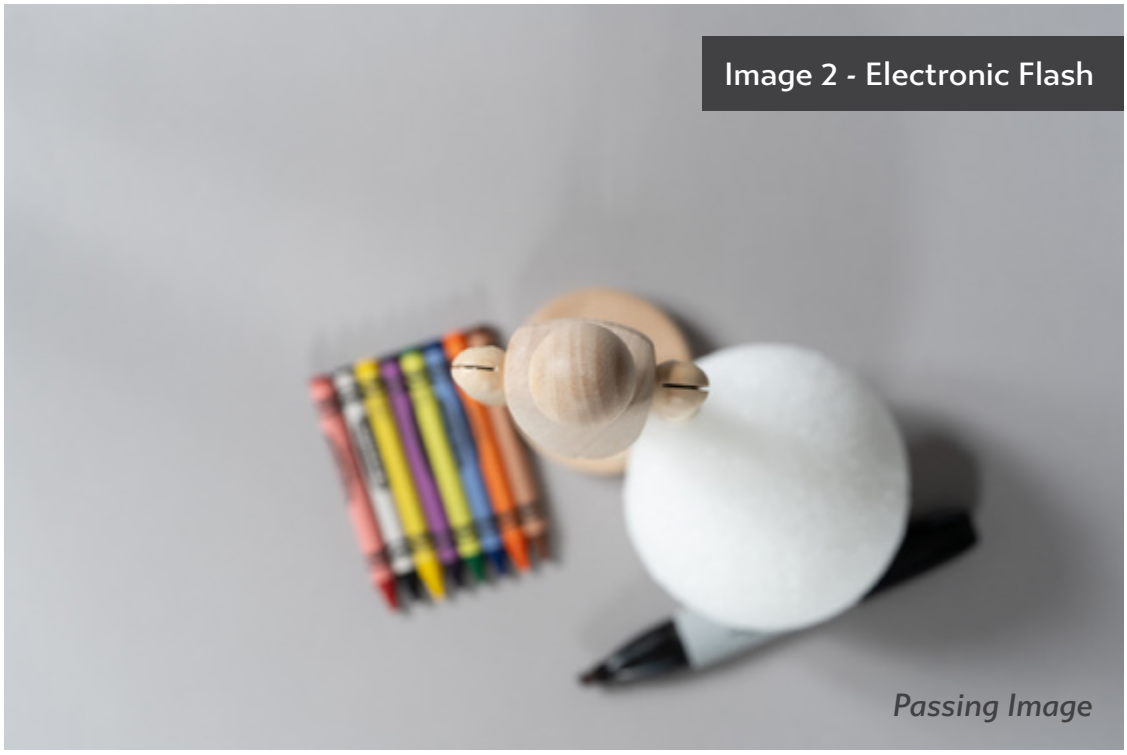
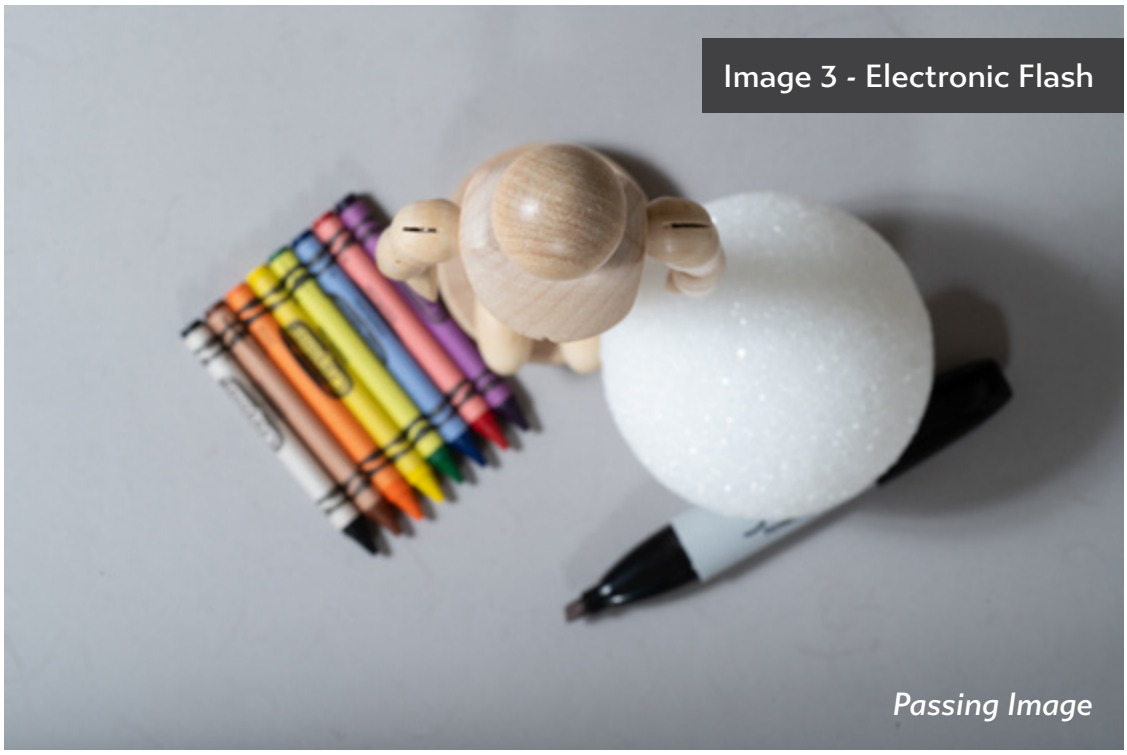
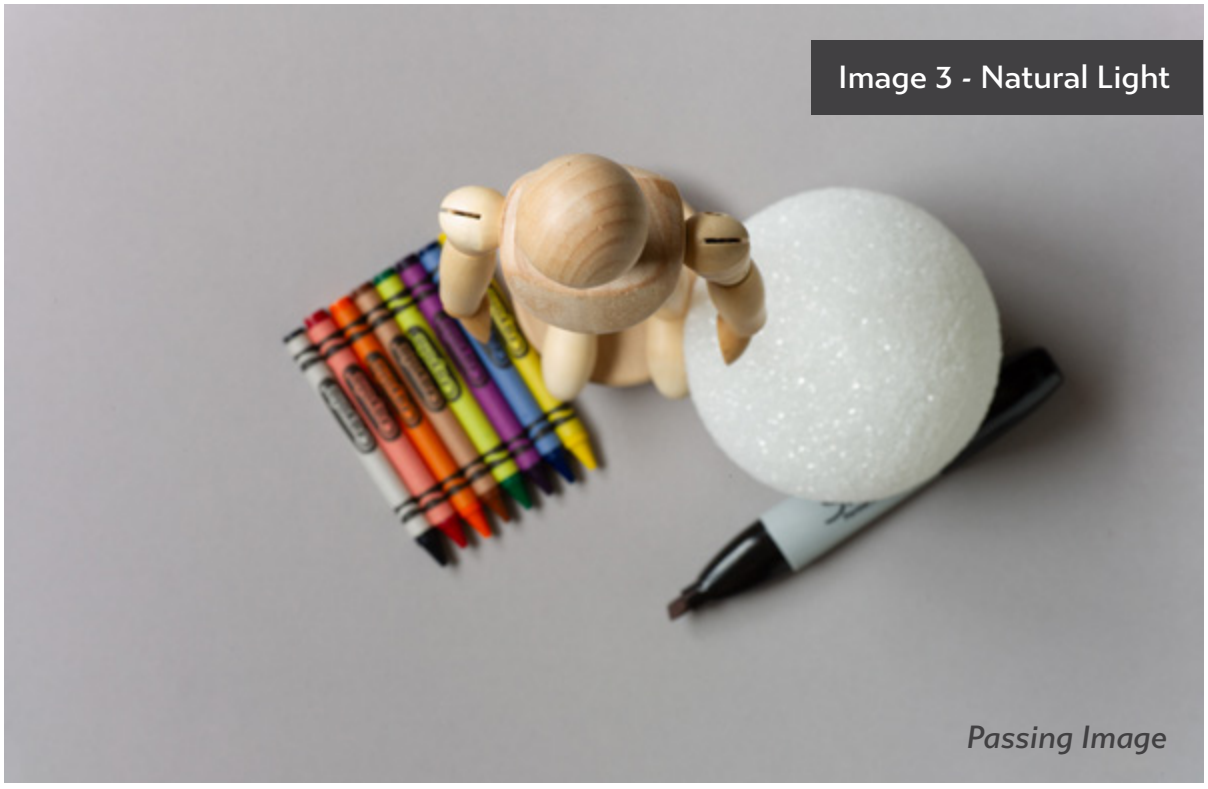




NATURAL LIGHT SAMPLES

NATURAL LIGHT SAMPLES



CONTINUOUS LIGHT SAMPLES

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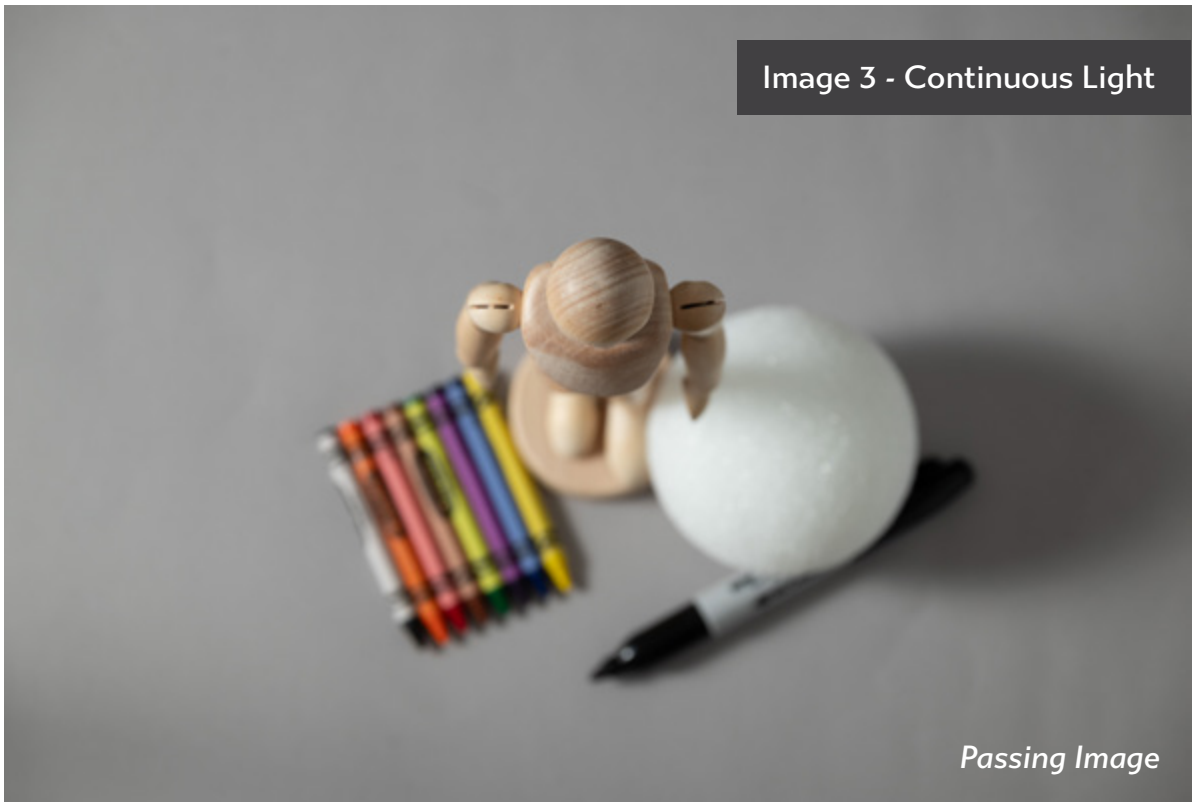


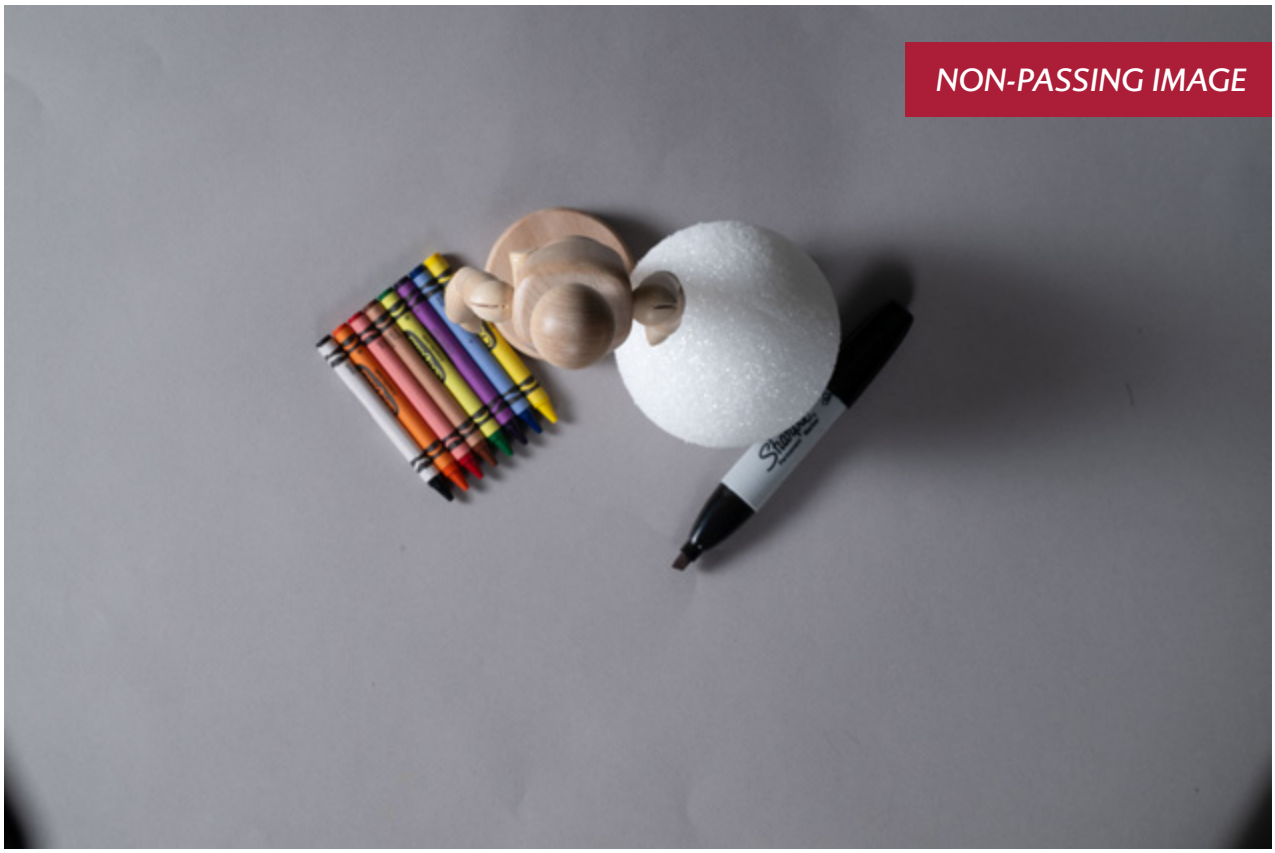
NON-PASSING IMAGE EXAMPLES

Can you spot the reason this image did not pass the evaluation?

Look at the bottom left area of the image and you will see the floor is showing outside the gray paper. Flooring or other items are not allowed to show outside the gray paper.

What direction is the light from the electronic flash coming from? Can you tell why this image did not pass the evaluation? *(Hint: look at where the shadows fall in the image.)*

Only one light fired in this image, the fill light, and that means the image did not pass due to failure to follow lighting instructions. Images photographed with flash/strobes must have a main and a fill light and the manikin will need to be lit properly according to the instructions.



Can you guess the two reasons why this image did not pass the evaluation?

1. The artifacts in the bottom corners of the image mean that the gray paper is not filling the edges of the image.
2. The image is underexposed, and the shadows were below the acceptable range.

Images must show detail in the highlights, midtones, and shadows. Remember to upload your images into Bridge or Lightroom and compare your three images to be certain the exposures are consistent. Use the eye dropper tool to check the highlights, shadows, and midtones to make sure they are within the acceptable ranges before you upload them for the evaluation.

Acceptable Highlight Range: 220–250

Acceptable Midtone Range: 195–230

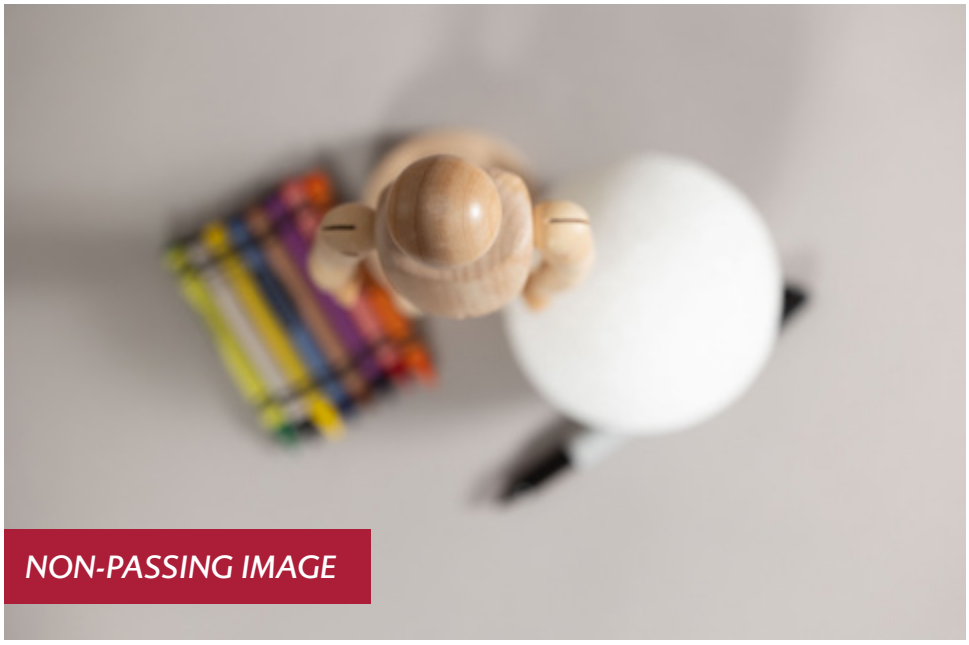
Acceptable Shadow Range: 5–35

This image was submitted as *Image I: Straight on, Portrait Orientation*.

Right away, you can tell the image was shot in landscape and needs to be in portrait orientation.

The continuous lighting choice unfortunately did not provide the image with the proper direction or amount of light, so the meter likely gave an extremely high ISO recommendation. The graininess is from a very high ISO and the image is not properly exposed.

The white balance is far too warm, and it is also possible this image was taken without the use of a tripod.



At first glance, you might not realize the reason this image did not pass the evaluation. Where is the highlight on the manikin? Is it in the correct place?
If you guessed that the direction of light is incorrect, you would be right!

The top of the manikin's head is not sharp which is why this image did not pass. Focal points are very important in photography as well as for the Technical Image Evaluation.

Take a look at the front of the manikin the same way you would view a client's face in a portrait, and you may notice that this is a classic example of split lighting. That can work well in some portraits, but for the Technical Image Evaluation, your images must be lit properly. Either the fill light was set too low or it did not fire when the image was taken, therefore this image did not pass the evaluation. This produces a harsh shadow across the manikin and over the foam ball. Let's compare this one with a passing image on the next page.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON OF **NON-PASSING** AND **PASSING** EXAMPLES

Non-passing due to failure to follow lighting directions

Passing image

When you look at these images, what are the main differences you notice in their lighting? Can you identify which direction the light is coming from?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TECHNICAL IMAGE EVALUATION

Do I have to pass the Certification Exam before attempting the Technical Image Evaluation?

Yes, you must pass the Certification Exam before you will be allowed to participate in the Technical Image Evaluation.

How do I order the kit for the evaluation?

You can order the Blick Art Materials Supply List here. For more detailed instructions and information on how to place your order, you can review the *How to Order Your Blick Art Materials Supply Guide*.

Do I have to use the items listed on the Blick Art Materials Supply list?

To keep evaluations uniform and impartial, candidates are required to use items listed on the Blick U Course Supply List | BLICK Art Materials (dickblick.com).

What if an item on the list is out of stock?

When purchasing your Technical Image Evaluation kit, at times an item may be out of stock. In this case, please check the alternative materials list on the Ordering Guide to view alternate item(s). Please note that alternative items at times will be added to the kit list, so items you receive can vary. Please email CPP@ppa.com if an item on the list is out of stock.

When should I order the kit?

It is recommended that you order the kit anytime during your two-year candidacy period so you are ready to take your images soon after you pass the Certification exam. Please allow 5-10 days for shipping after you place your order.

Should I use a tripod when taking the images?

It is recommended that you use a tripod to avoid any camera shake or blur that could affect your photos.

When can I submit my images?

Once you pass the CPP Exam, you are eligible to participate in the Technical Image Evaluation. There are ten evaluation periods per year, and they begin in February. Eligible candidates will receive an email notification at 12pm ET on the date that the Technical Image Evaluation period opens notifying them that the evaluation is open for submissions. The candidate will have one week to upload three images that fit within their chosen criteria.

How do I submit my images to the Technical Image Evaluation?

Once a candidate has passed the exam, they will receive an email notification that the evaluation is open for submissions. Candidates can access the evaluation upload platform by logging into their MyPPA dashboard and navigating to the myAchievements tab. Then, select "Certifications" to expand the section where the candidate can view the option to "Upload Evaluation".

How many images do I submit? Each candidate is required to submit THREE (3) images that depict key photographic techniques.

Image 1 – Straight on, Portrait orientation
Image 2 – Overhead, Landscape orientation
Image 3 – Overhead, Landscape orientation

How are the images evaluated?

All images are reviewed by trained evaluators. All images are evaluated according to the Technical Image Evaluation Checklist, with each image reviewed on the same objective scale. Please note: Images are evaluated in the most recent version of Adobe Bridge and Camera Raw only, Profile: Adobe Standard.

When and how will I receive my results?

The review process takes one to two weeks. Technical Image Evaluations results will be sent via email approximately one to two weeks after the evaluation deadline.

Can I submit images that I took during a workshop or were taken under the supervision of an instructor?

Images taken in a workshop environment or under direct supervision of an instructor are not allowed for image evaluation. All images submitted must be self-directed and individually set up.

Is there a limit to the number of times I can submit images?

Eligible candidates can submit images as many times as needed within their TWO (2) year candidacy period. Evaluation cycles occur ten times per year. If the candidate does not pass the Technical Image Evaluation within the two-year candidacy period, they can reach out to the Credentialing Coordinator to request a one-year extension for $100.

What are the upload requirements?

Images must be shot and submitted in the smallest RAW format available on your camera.

What happens if I do not pass the evaluation?

You will need to retake and submit the images that do not pass during the next evaluation period. It is recommended to refer to your feedback notes with any failed images and make those corrections for the next evaluation.

Do I have to resubmit images that have been accepted?

No, you only need to resubmit images that were not accepted.

When will I receive the Gold Tube with my certificate, pin, and decals in it?

You will receive your Gold Tube in the mail approximately three weeks after the date that you received your passing email notification.

How do I maintain my Certification?

Once you become a Certified Professional Photographer, you will need to recertify every three years. Please see the Recertification page for details.

Who do I contact with questions regarding my Technical Image Evaluation results?

You can reach out to the Credentialing Coordinator at CPP@ppa.com or call at 404-522-8600 Ext 278.